

Menus in child care: a comparison of state regulations with national standards.

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The purpose of this project was to compare individual state regulations regarding menus for child-care centers and family child-care homes with national menu standards. For all 50 states and the District of Columbia, state regulations were compared with menu standards found in Caring for Our Children--National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs. Specifically, these guidelines suggest that (a) menus must be posted or made available to parents, (b) menus must be dated, (c) menus must reflect food served, (d) menus must be planned in advance, and (e) menus must be kept on file. One additional standard, that menus in child care are reviewed by a nutrition professional, was added to this review. Data were collected between June and August of 2007. Substantial variation existed among state regulations regarding menus. For child-care centers, seven states (14%) included regulations on all five standards, and 13 states (25%) had regulations on four of the five menu standards. Ten states (20%) did not have any regulations on the five menu standards. For family child-care homes, only three states (6%) had regulations on all five menu standards; four states (8%) had regulations on four of the five menu standards. Twenty-seven states (53%) did not have any regulations on the five standards for menus. Within the same state, regulations for child-care centers and family child-care homes often did not match. Overall, great discrepancies were found between model child-care menu policies and current state regulations in most states. States have the opportunity to improve regulations regarding menus to ensure that child-care providers develop accurate, specific, and healthful menus.

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